

College Students and Familial Communication

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ABSTRACT

- The purpose of this study is to investigate college students' perceptions of family communication before and during the transition to college. The study surveyed first-generation and non-first-generation undergraduates, identifying key family communication styles as well as cultural indicators of world view.
- The study uses Olson's Circumplex Model (Olson, 1998) as a framework to examine how situational experiences amongst college students vary, how their experiences become an integral component in their daily lives and how this eventually transfers to their family communication dynamic. This study highlights the interactions of college students with their families as they transition to collegiate life.

INTRODUCTION

- FGCS comprise a third of all entering college freshman
- In the U.S., yet 89% of them are likely to drop out without a degree within six years. 26% of FGCS will earn a college degree within eight years, compared to 68% of continuing-generation students which shows that FGCS face various challenges in completing their tertiary education, one being family-related.
- The current study is delimited by focusing on FGCS and familial communication.
- Challenges relating to family include change in family dynamics, family involvement, self-identity around family, and familial communication.

METHOD

PARTICIPANTS

- A convenience sample of 46 students from UW-Eau Claire completed an electronic survey.
- Of these participants, 20% were male and 80% were female between the ages of 18-25.
- The sample was relatively homogenous with the majority identifying as white.

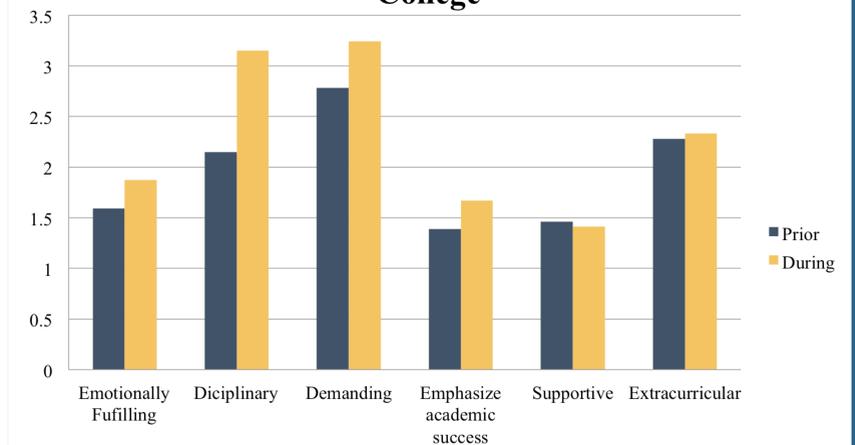
MEASURES

- The survey measured demographics, family satisfaction, tensions in communication style with family, family relationships affect on academic performance and differences in communication style prior to postsecondary education and after. These scales were researcher-created.
- The format of the survey questions were short answers, multiple choice and Likert-type scales.

RESULTS

- We conducted Paired Samples T-Tests and correlations to analyze our data.
- Participants rated their families more emotionally fulfilling, demanding, disciplinary and emphasized academic success more prior to college compared to now (i.e., during college).
- Participants indicated that as their political, religious, ethical and cultural views differed from their families' they were more uncomfortable discussing these issues with their families.
- Most participants indicated they talk with their parents or guardians 1-3 times per week and most indicated they talk to their mother the most.

Characterization of Family: Prior and During College



***The numbers are counter intuitive where relationships are reflected opposite as to what the findings inferred.*

DISCUSSION

- We accept our hypotheses, that (1) students tend to dissociate from their families physically and psychologically, such that their relationship will become more distant and their values will differ and (2) students will characterize their relationship with the families differently pre- and post-secondary education.
- Psychological dissociation is a result of physical dissociation: as students become more independent by moving out of the house and starting their own career path, they become both psychologically and physically independent from their family of origin.
- Participants indicated parents or guardians were more disciplinary, demanding and emphasized academic success prior to college because students were living at home under their parents rule; participants indicated their familial relationships were more emotionally fulfilling prior to college, perhaps because their familial relationships were more central in their lives.